



ABSTRACT

First suggested in the Netherlands, in the late-1980s, the notion of “Social Movement Unionism” was first applied in South Africa, where it had both political and academic impact. The South-African formulation combined the class and the popular: a response to this combined class and new social movement theory/practice. The “Class/Popular” understanding was, however, more widely adopted, and applied (to and/or in Brazil, the Philippines, the USA, internationally), receiving its most influential formulation in the work of Kim Moody (USA). A “Class/New Social Movement” response to this was restated in terms of the “New Social Unionism.” The continuing impact of globalization and neo-liberalism has had a disorienting effect on even the unions supposed by the South African/US

school to *best exemplify* SMU, whilst simultaneously increasing trade union need for *some kind* of such an alternative model. Use and discussion of the notion continues. The development of the “global justice and solidarity movement” (symbolized by Seattle, 1999), and in particular the World Social Forum process, since 2001, may be putting the matter on the international trade-union agenda. But is *this* matter a Class/Popular alliance, a Class/New Social Movement alliance? Or both? Or something else? And are there other ways of recreating an international/ist labour movement with emancipatory intentions and effect? What is the future of emancipatory or utopian labour strategy in the epoch of a globalized networked capitalism, and the challenge of the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement?

ADVENTURES OF EMANCIPATORY LABOUR STRATEGY AS THE NEW GLOBAL MOVEMENT CHALLENGES INTERNATIONAL UNIONISM*

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INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND TO A DIALOGUE

First suggested by myself, in the Netherlands, in the late-1980s, the notion of Social Movement Unionism (SMU) was first *applied* by Rob Lambert¹ and Eddie Webster, in South Africa where it had considerable political and academic impact. Unhappy with their Class/Popular-Community understanding, I then (re-)conceptualised SMU in Class+New Social Movement terms, with a distinct international/ist dimension. This was meant not to oppose but to surpass the South African understanding. However, the Class/Popular-Community understanding was more widely adopted in, and/or applied to, Brazil, the Philippines, the USA, Sri Lanka and at international level. It received its most influential formulation in the work of Kim Moody (USA):

In social movement unionism...[u]nions take an active lead in the streets, as well as in politics. They ally with other social movements, but provide a class vision and content that make for a stronger glue than that which usually holds electoral or temporary coalitions together. That content is not simply the demands of the movements, but the activation of the mass of union members as the leaders of the charge—those who in most cases have the greatest social and economic leverage in capitalist society. Social movement unionism implies an active strategic orientation that uses the strongest of society’s

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¹ Lambert’s latest contributions (2003b,c) arrived too late for commentary. But they are certainly pertinent and they move a long dialogue forward.

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oppressed and exploited, generally organised workers, to mobilise those who are less able to sustain self-mobilisation: the poor, the unemployed, the casualised workers, the neighbourhood organizations. (Moody 1997b: 276).

Moody also gave the term a clear international/ist orientation, though the model internationalism he offered was also problematic: it treated industrial workers within transnational corporations as the vanguard of labour, it presented theirs as a vanguard internationalism, and it was over-identified with a particular network more familiar to himself than it was influential internationally (Pp. 227–310, see Waterman 2000).² We will see that over-identification with organizations, or over-generalization from cases, is a more general problem amongst SMU believers (Lambert and Webster 2003).

Within discussion of SMU, the most conceptually-sophisticated and empirically-informed contribution is, perhaps, that of Karl von Holdt (2002). Von Holdt critiques the SMU concept (1) for its over-generality, (2) for its failure to recognize the historical/communal determinants of worker consciousness and action and (3) how these might militate against, or at least significantly qualify, the heightened class-consciousness the criticised authors assume within the workplace and the nation (and, by implication, the world). He expresses scepticism about the “transferability of union strategies across national frontiers” (2002:299) and proposes to rather concentrate on the relationship between the institutional and movement aspects of trade unionism (nation by nation? workplace by workplace?). Von Holdt’s identification of the chasms and leaps in SMU are important, his stress on history and community, on considering the institution/movement tension, is valuable. Whether, however, his strictures apply equally to Moody *and* Waterman, I would like to question. This because his discussion is of the Class/Popular-Community interpretation, rather than the Class/Social-Movement one. Thus, whilst he makes a gesture toward social-movement theory (but only, curiously, of the US liberal-democratic variety), he

² This network is the Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE). TIE was the pre-eminent promoter of shopfloor worker internationalism in the 1980s, when it also produced publications that pioneered in both content and form. Its Amsterdam office today confines its activities to project formulation and fund-raising, having abandoned its previous consciousness-raising and mobilising activities. TIE has, however, offices and activities in North America (in the same building Kim Moody long worked from), South-East Asia and elsewhere. Like SIGTUR (see below), it has no visible presence within the World Social Forums. It does, however, have an excellent website, <http://www.tieasia.org>. It is notable that these two networks exist in apparent ignorance of each other.

understands the new movements generically as “non-class” (185). The failure to consider these positively and autonomously—and as political equivalents in the struggle against neo-liberalism and globalization—limits the force and extent of his conclusions:

This argument implies that globalization is unlikely to produce the conditions for a globalized SMU as advocated by Moody and Waterman...National reality counts. (299)

Von Holdt, it seems to me, here abandons both the ambition of social theorists to produce general (universal, global) theory, and of socialists to develop general (international/ist, emancipatory) strategies. Moreover, as I will later argue, and despite his doubts, SMU has a frail but not-insignificant presence within and around the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement.³

In any case, around 2001, I conceded the concept of SMU to the Class/Popular interpretation, whilst attempting to further my original understanding as the “New Social Unionism,” and to extend it by spelling out the meaning of networking and the role of communications and culture here (Appendix 1).

Now, the continuing impact of globalisation and neo-liberalism has had a disorienting effect on even the supposed Third World exemplars of SMU (explaining Von Holdt’s pessimism?), whilst simultaneously increasing international trade union need for *some kind* of ISMU/NISU. Use and even discussion of the notion has not ceased. On the contrary, it appears to be increasing (see bibliography). The development of the “global justice and solidarity movement” (GJ&SM, symbolized by Seattle, 1999), and in particular the World Social Forum (WSF) process since 2001, is beginning to put the matter on the trade union agenda. But is *this* matter a Class/Popular-Community alliance, a Class/New Social Movement alliance? Or both? Or something else? And is this still a useful concept for development?

A couple of final notes about terminology and coverage. In what follows:

- SMU = Social Movement Unionism, the umbrella term for the ongoing dialogue or debate;

³ It apparently has, moreover, a growing presence in the writings of socially-committed researchers. A case would be the draft PhD of Biyanwila (2003), which includes an extensive chapter on SMU. This not only provides a more-detailed discussion of the literature than can be given here. It also puts this literature within the context of social-movement theory more generally. And, whilst bracketing the debate on SMU, the PhD work of Mario Novelli (2003), suggests that something very much like this is developing even under the extremely union-hostile conditions of contemporary Colombia.

- ✦ ISMU = International Social Movement Unionism, the Class/Popular or Kim Moody interpretation;
- ✦ NISU = New International Social Unionism, the Class/New Social Movement version, my own interpretation.

In-text references will be limited. The interested reader can find most of the relevant sources in the extended bibliography. Disgruntled contributors to the debate, who feel they have been misrepresented—sometimes without being recognized or named—should feel free to reply, as also, of course, those I have failed to even mention.

The argument proceeds as follows: Part 1 deals with the paradox(es) surrounding the trajectory of the concept, and the two tendencies identifiable within the debate; Part 2 deals with the opportunity and challenge to SMU represented by the GJ&SM; Part 3 presents evidence from the 2003 World Social Forum concerning SMU; Part 4 reviews relevant literature, either critical of the concept, or outside the debate, yet still contributing to an emancipatory alternative for the international labour movement. The Conclusion argues that it is within the orbit of the new movement that a new emancipatory understanding of labour and its internationalism will develop.

1. A PARADOX, A PARADOX, A MOST INGENIOUS PARADOX

Alberto Melucci, generally recognized as the man who coined the phrase and developed the theory of “new social movements,” was sufficiently unhappy about the (mis)use of the concept to wish to disown it. I have related feelings about SMU. I am delighted to see that it is in the use of labour specialists and union leaders (see below), but uneasy about the way it is being understood or applied. Despite various efforts over the years, and despite often friendly reference to my own writings, users of the concept of SMU have just as commonly misunderstood and/or misapplied it. As a later quote from the International Metalworkers Federation (IMWF) reveals, however, this has not rescued even NISU from a workerist understanding! Let us work our way through the paradox.

Misunderstanding

My formulation was, I would have thought, clear, even simple or schematic. It was a synthesis of socialist trade-union theory with that of “new social movement” (NSM) theory, as the latter was shaping up in the 1980s. To this I added ideas on informatization drawn from radical sociologists and communications specialists. From socialist trade-union theory I took the significance of capitalist work, of class contradiction, of worker self-organization; and of class struggle as both subversive of existing capitalist relations, and essential for international solidarity and human self-emancipation. From NSM theory I took the significance

of radical-democratic identity movements, the equivalence of different radical-democratic struggles, of networking as movement form, of the socio-cultural as an increasingly central arena of emancipatory struggle. From radical communications theory I took ideas on the potential of the information and communication technology for emancipatory movements. The kind of internationalism with which this was articulated was a post-nationalist kind, which I eventually conceptualized as the New Global Solidarity. Evidently this amounted to a critique of socialist trade-union theory, in so far as that school proposes, as does Kim Moody, the vanguard role of the working-class amongst social movements—and in advancing internationalism. But it also amounted to a reminder, to the often class-blind New Social Movement theorists, of the continuing importance of work and unions to social emancipation.

Yet most of those who have used the SMU concept have understood it not in terms of an articulation between the two or more bodies of theory, or two complexes of practice, but in that of an alliance within the class (waged/non-waged), and/or between the class and the popular/community (workers/people, labour/nationalist). And, in most cases, they have understood it in terms, as earlier suggested, of the workers/unions as the vanguard of the popular or emancipatory movement. In so far as most application was to or from the nation-state (the state-defined nation), it sometimes assumed the new internationalism to be primarily that between *national* SMUs (e.g. between the national trade union centres of South Africa, South Korea, Brazil, the Philippines).

This was a progressive understanding but not a *radical* one. It was progressive in so far as it was an implicit or explicit critique of Leninist, Social-Democratic or Liberal theories and practices, and a move toward a broader understanding of a labour movement. It was not radical because it failed to go to the roots of the crisis of trade unionism. These roots lie, surely, in the transformation from a national-industrialising capitalism (NIC), whether imperial or anti-imperialist, into a globalised networked capitalism (GNC), in which production and services, work-for-capital and the working classes are undergoing the most massive de- and re-construction, and unions are being reduced in size and politically marginalized. Furthermore, the understanding was *not radical* because of its failure to recognize the significance of the NSMs, national and international, in emancipatory theory or practice. Thus, for example, where recognition was given to women’s struggles, this was customarily with “working women” and not with women’s struggles in general, nor with feminist theory. The crisis lies, finally and fundamentally, in the union *form*, which is still primarily organizational/institutional in a period in which both capitalism and the global justice and solidarity movement are taking the *network* form. Or, to put this theoretically, it is that the inter/national labour movement is still being understood in *organizational/institutional*

tutional terms when it increasingly needs to be understood in *networking/communicational* ones.

It seems to me that the problem here is that most of the writers concerned have been over-identified with one or more of the following: the waged working class; the union form; socialist ideology/theory. This means, in practice, an over-identification with the national-industrial (even the specifically Fordist) working class, union form and ideology/theory. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere (Waterman 2001b), this is the most difficult site from which to develop an emancipatory labour internationalism.

Misapplication

My original conceptualization was a theoretical synthesis, but simultaneously a generalization and projection from new experiences of social struggle and internationalism developing in the 1980s–90s. It was, however, also intended to function as a critique of actually-existing unionism and union theory. It was not meant to be a *description* and even less a *justification* of any existing union experience. It was utopian, in the dual meaning of this term: nowhere and good place/process (Panitch and Leys 2000).

The original understanding, moreover, was intended to be both international and internationalist. In a terminology more specific to the era of globalisation, it was intended to be both global in relevance and to express and further global solidarity. It was, finally, meant to provoke theoretical discussion and development. Most, if not all, of the uses of SMU were, however, simultaneously descriptive and positive—if not celebratory. The quotation below may be a caricature but, like a caricature, it may bring out something that a conventional representation would not:

The ABCD Confederation of Trade Unions is a social movement union and it is good. Other unions please follow.

Thus was it used in the 1980s–90s of the new radical and militant unions in South Africa, Brazil and the Philippines. When it was used more internationally, critically or futurologically, this was still in Labour/Popular-Community form, and with the vanguard clearly represented by the Fordist working class and Left, Socialist or even Communist trade unions—and related parties. In so far as certain unions were taken as *exemplifying* SMU, the concept was, by this token and to this extent, deprived of critical function. Where it was used *strategically* or *futurologically*, but still of the national-industrial union institutions, it became incapable of surpassing a form of worker self-articulation linked to a passing period of capitalist development. Where it was seen as relevant to only a *particular place* (“the South”) or a *particular period* (of struggle against authoritarian, imperial, racist power), it was deprived of universality (the aspiration, I have

suggested, of any emancipatory theory or strategy).

Finally, it has to be said that those most-energetically promoting SMU, and most-closely working with trade unions, failed to define or redefine the concept, leaving it with the most general (and unconceptualised) characteristics: “democratic”, “shopfloor”, “non-party”, “allied to other popular movements.” These limitations have, I recognize, also enabled it to continue and even spread amongst actually-existing inter/national unions. But the limitations just as evidently have a price tag attached.

The end of SMU as we have known it?

The limits placed on SMU, by tying it to particular unions, limiting it to a passing period of capitalist development, or by presenting it as a left or socialist policy/practice for institutionalized unionism, have been severe. The leading exemplars offered—COSATU in South Africa, the CUT in Brazil, and the KMU in the Philippines—have lost much or all of their SMU characteristics, being increasingly entrapped within neo-liberal industrial relations dispensations that make it difficult to carry out even traditional collective-bargaining functions for diminishing numbers of members. In the case of South Africa, the country in which it was first applied and in which it has been most discussed, SMU appears to have been one of a series of models which have less led the unions out of a systemic crisis than accompanied their decline in autonomy and dynamism—and their continuing lack of articulation with a rising wave of social movements (Bramble 2003, Bramble and Barchiesi 2003)! In the case of the COSATU-supported Southern Initiative on Globalization and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR) it may explain why this is *trailing* rather than *leading*, why it is *marginal* rather than *central*, to international labour movement engagement with the GJ&SM.⁴ By attaching SMU to specific times/places/cases, the concept follows an institutional trajectory, is constrained by national/regional frontiers, and,

⁴ SIGTUR is a leftist network of national unions, which finds itself, willy-nilly, somewhere between the institutionalised trade union internationals and the global justice and solidarity movement that is increasingly attracting unions (see below). It has been energetically and repeatedly championed by Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster (see Bibliography) who, whilst occasionally revealing problems within the network, nonetheless insist on its exemplary representation of the new international social movement unionism. Whilst its Korean and South African affiliates have been present and active within the World Social Forums (2001–3), SIGTUR, as such, has not. Furthermore, whilst Lambert and Webster have repeatedly claimed for it an internet existence, it has so far no website, nor more than a minimal presence on the web. Moreover, as indicated below, its national-union constituency obstructs its reach to unions unaffiliated to its

therefore condemned to the fate of traditional left utopianism (Beilharz 1992). This is, inevitably, to become a “conservative utopianism:”

“What characterizes conservative utopias and distinguishes them from critical utopias is the fact that they identify themselves with the present-day reality and discover their utopian dimension in the radicalization or complete fulfillment of the present” (Sousa Santos 2003).

This may seem a somewhat brutal fate to be visited upon *any* attempt at labour internationalism. But I would consider that the notion of a conservative utopia applies equally, if differently, to the Social-Democratic as to the Soviet utopia. And the quote does identify two elements within the projects I have treated as progressive rather than radical. Firstly, that they attach their utopia to the “radicalisation or complete fulfillment” of actually-existing unionism. Secondly, that they are not *critical*, in the sense of not applying a critique of the dominant social order to the unions or networks that they are describing—and promoting.⁵

2. THE CHALLENGE OF THE “GLOBAL JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT”

The “Anti-Corporate”, “Anti-Capitalist”, “Anti-Globalisation” movement, the “Movement of Movements” is, as these various names might suggest, an amorphous or changing political or theoretical object. Indeed, the question has been

members, as well as to the burgeoning inter/national networks of the non-unionised. One has to note, finally, that whilst Lambert and Webster add new conceptual notes and empirical information to their pieces, they fail to provide any comparative perspective (concerning other new labour networks) and also avoid confronting at least my challenges to their argument (Waterman 2001b). One is bound to fear that, even if it eventually attends the Fourth World Social Forum, in India, 2004, it is going to be inevitably constrained, in its relations to other internationalist networks, by its dependence on its two Indian member organizations. (Update March 1, 2004: I have as yet no evidence of the promised SIGTUR participation at WSF4).

⁵ For the current face of conservative utopianism amongst South African labour specialists, see Harcourt and Wood (2003). Whilst implicitly conceding, in a footnote, the possibility of SMU in the long run, their immediate preference is for a neo-corporatist social partnership between COSATU and the ANC-dominated state. In so far as this would imply both the abandonment of such autonomy of thought and action as COSATU still enjoys, and in so far as it would institutionalise its isolation from the overwhelming majority of the unincorporated labouring people, this is surely a counsel of despair. The authors, additionally, also take a passing swipe at the self-isolated South African “ultra-left.” All this seems somewhat out of date in the light of the rising wave of social protest in South Africa since around 2000, a wave, incidentally, which those we must surely call simply “the left,” has been both engaged in and reflecting upon.

raised of whether it is a “movement,” or a “field” (which latter term lack, I think, both bark and bite). Liberal pundits and national-industrial socialists worry about the GJ&SM’s lack of traditional movement characteristics: an organization; a leadership; a programme; an aim; an ideology.

My feeling is this: if it looks like a movement, barks like a movement, wags its tail like a movement, and *moves* people like a movement, then it *is* a movement.⁶

Whilst each of the earlier terms above captures an aspect of this amorphous movement being/becoming, the “Global Justice and Solidarity Movement”—the name given it by the World Social Movement Network (WSMN) within the Second World Social Forum, early 2002—seems to me as good a characterization (of its present stage of development) as any. Given the discredit from which liberalism, populism and socialism, reformism and insurrectionism, currently suffer, this name should be acceptable, and even attractive, to not only the old activists but to those just now becoming aware and active. It simply has to have more appeal than “One Solution: Revolution!” of the Socialist Workers Party, UK, or the “Third Way,” of Tony Blair-Giddens, also in the UK.⁷

“The Battle of Seattle” and the World Social Forums are perhaps the best-known emanations of the GJ&SM. But the movements provoked by neo-liberalism and globalisation began with the “Food Riots” or “World Bank Riots” in the Third World of the 1980s. And, in so far as we are speaking of a network—of understanding the GJ&SM in network/communication/ cultural terms—then

⁶ This is a remark of such reprehensible levity that it is guaranteed to raise hackles, or groans, amongst any social movement specialist of my acquaintance. I have taken the concept somewhat more seriously in my last monograph (Waterman 2001: Chapter 7). And I recommend readers to a serious re-consideration of the matter in the light of globalisation and social protest (Edelman 2001).

⁷ Alex Callinicos (2003), who is from the former and against the latter, has called the movement “anti-capitalist,” whilst simultaneously admitting the problematic nature of his descriptor. This is, surely, a teleological procedure: reading causality backwards from an inevitable final condition (his gender-challenged and political-economistic concept of socialism), Callinicos foists this term on people who are not socialists or may be even anti-socialist (because of Stalin? Social Democracy? The SWP?). He thus implies (1) that these non-socialists are lacking in, I suppose, “class-consciousness,” and (2) that the SWP has this. In so far as the GJ&SM *may* become an anti- or post-capitalist movement, and even become socialist, this is likely to be through a process of (a) collective self-education and (b) a 21st century re-invention of socialism, which may owe a limited amount to previous holders of the keys to the kingdom.

“it” has no fixed shape or borders (institutional or political-geographic), requiring repeated assessment of: (1) its places and spaces; (2) its forms of expression; (3) its political, socio-cultural, ideological, economic impacts at any of three or more levels (local, national, regional, global); and (4) in terms of its reach at each of these, and the inter-relations between such.

Whilst recognizing the absence of institutional or socio-political borders of this movement, we still need to evaluate the meaning, weight, and dynamism of its varied forces at varying times and places. These matters are now subject to energetic conceptualization and evaluation. It may be easier to recognize what the GJ&SM is *not* than what it *is*: it is not a replay of the 1968 movement (though this is one forebear); it is *not* a labour or socialist movement (though unions and socialists are active within it and affected by it); it is *not* a 1980s-type New Social Movement (though many of the movements and ideas of the 1980s find expression within it); it is *neither* a creature of the (inter)national non-governmental organizations, *nor* does it represent global civil society (though certain NGOs have a major weight within it, and the WSF is *one* representation of a Radical-Democratic GCS in formation).

This is, evidently, the first major radical-democratic movement of the epoch of a GNC (for the major radical but *undemocratic* ones, consider the various religious and national-communal fundamentalisms). It is a *radical-democratic* movement, in the sense that it represents a response to, against and beyond the hegemonic globalization project known as neo-liberalism. It is radically-democratic in so far as it seeks out the roots of that project and suggests, increasingly, alternatives to such. It is radically-democratic also because it seeks for democracy-without-limits, as an alternative to the low-intensity-democracy+neo-liberalism, being presently promoted, alongside war-without-end, by the imperial and global hegemons. It is also potentially *holistic*, in so far as it addresses, centrally political-economic issues, linking these with the needs of repressed or under-represented identities and minorities (these sometimes being such *majorities* as women and the South). It is potentially holistic, also, in so far as it represents a dialogue of cultures and is open, potentially, to other epistemologies (Sousa Santos 2003). This is, finally, a movement of the *present epoch* because it is networked/communicational/cultural, thus inhabiting and disputing not only the national industrial (anti)colonial capitalism (NIC) of the continuing past but the globalized networked capitalism (GNC) of the unfolding future.⁸

The challenge of the GJ&SM must increasingly, however, be seen not only in terms of an external challenge from the new movement to the old institutions but from the new movement to *itself* (within which workers' movements are assumed). What is at issue here is a challenge of new to old *understandings* of labour and other social movements (and NGOs), and, therefore to an under-

standing of SMU that is embedded (to use a suggestive military/media relationship) within traditional labour movement and labour studies paradigms. The new understanding is again well expressed by Sousa Santos (2003):

[D]eepening the WSF's goals requires forms of aggregation and articulation of higher intensity. Such a process includes articulating struggles and resistances, as well as promoting ever more comprehensive and consistent alternatives. Such articulations presuppose combinations among the different social movements and NGOs that are bound to question their very identity and autonomy as they have been conceived of so far. If the idea is to promote counter-hegemonic practices and knowledges that have the collaboration of ecological, pacifist, indigenous, feminist, workers' and other movements, and if the idea is to go about this horizontally and with respect for the identity of every movement, an enormous effort of mutual recognition, dialogue, and debate will be required to carry out the task [...]

The point is to create, in every movement or NGO, in every practice or strategy, in every discourse or knowledge, a contact zone that may render it porous and hence permeable to other NGOs [and movements? PW], practices, strategies, discourses, and knowledges. The exercise of translation aims to identify and potentiate what is common in the diversity of the counter-hegemonic drive. Cancelling out what separates is out of the question. The goal is to have host-difference replace fortress-difference... [Examples of such translations could be those] between the indigenous movement and the ecological movement; between the workers' movement and the feminist movement. To be successful, the work of translation depends on demanding conditions. Nonetheless, the effort must be taken up. On it depends the future of counter-hegemonic globalization.

It is such an understanding of the interpenetration and transformation of understandings and practices, the opening-up of movements and movement institutions to each other, and the self-transformation of the parties thus mutually engaged, that the New International Social Unionism implies.

3. TIUIs, WSF3, SMU, etc

I must here limit myself to one place/space/event/aspect: the presence of the traditional international union institutions (TIUIs) at the Third World Social Forum (WSF3), Porto Alegre, in January 2003. The WSF is not, of course, the GJ&SM as a whole. But, then, the TIUIs are not the international trade union

⁸ Such positive generalizations are not only open to challenge but have been questioned in my own writings about the WSF (see Bibliography). The generalizations can be—and should be—criticized as expressing a desire, a strategy, rather than a critique. They will, nonetheless, serve a purpose here, that of considering the relative fit between the WSF and the SMU concept in general, as well as its two variants in particular.

movement—even less the international *labour* movement—as a whole. However, the TIUI-WSF dialectic here should provide a further basis for reflection on SMU more generally.⁹

WSF3 saw a growth and deepening of the relationship between the TIUIs and the Forum.¹⁰ There are already about a dozen inter/national unions on the International Council (IC) of the Forum, most of which are anti-*neo-liberal* but not *anti-capitalist*, and many of which are, due to neo-liberalism and globalisation, in considerable crisis. There is no evidence that they have tried to act within the IC as a bloc. With one or two exceptions, they may have been primarily concerned with finding out what kind of exotic animal—or zoo—this is.

The increasing interest of this major traditional movement institution in the Forum was demonstrated by the presence, for the first time, of the General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). But top officers of Global Union Federations (GUFs, formerly International Trade Secretariats) were also present, either prominently on platforms or quietly testing the water. Also present were inter/national union organizations/networks from beyond the ICFTU family (now formalized as Global Unions). This year there were, in addition to the radical union networks from France or Italy, an independent left union confederation from the Philippines, two left mineworker activists from India, and, no doubt, hundreds of movement-oriented unionists from other countries. I noted also an increasing openness to the new movement amongst even the most traditional of TIUIs.

Whilst the first big union event at the Forum was a formal panel with only gestures in the direction of discussion (here, admittedly, reproducing a problematic Forum formula), a major panel on the union/social-movement relationship saw the platform shared between the Global Unions, independent left unions and articulate leaders of social movements or NGOs heavily identified with the Forum process. The unions, moreover, seemed increasingly prepared to recognize that they *are* institutions and that it is *they* that need to come to terms with a place and process that, whilst lacking in formal representativity and often inchoate, nevertheless has the appeal, dynamism, public reach and mobilizing capacity that they themselves both seriously lack and urgently need. The formal represen-

⁹ The following is drawn from Waterman 2003b

¹⁰ I did not attend all major union events. And, notably, I missed a session on relations between old and new social movements, within which unions were represented and union-movement relations discussed. This was, fortunately, attended by Nikhil Anand (2003), who sets discussion of this matter within a discussion of social movement theory, and who develops a conceptual approach of considerable originality and purchase.

tativity of the TIUIs conceals the ignorance or passivity of most union members internationally. The TIUIs know they have 157 to 200 million members. But how many of these members know that the TIUIs have *them*?¹¹

The question, however, remains of *what kind of* relationship is developing here. From the first big union event, patronized by the charismatic Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO), veteran Chilean socialist, Juan Somavia, I got the strong impression that what was shaping up was some kind of understanding or alliance between (1) the Unions, (2) the Social Forum and (3) Progressive States/men. The latter were here evidently represented by the universally and unconditionally-praised PT Government and President Lula. Somavia, who had just met Lula formally in Brasilia, made explicit comparison between the ILO's new programme/slogan of "Decent Work" and Lula's election slogan "For a Decent Brazil" (in both cases "decent" suggests something better whilst avoiding confrontation with, or even identifying, something clearly worse).

In so far as the TIUIs appear to have swallowed "Decent Work"—hook, line and two smoking barrels—what is surely suggested here is a global neo-keynesianism, in which the unions and their ILO/WSF friends would recreate the post-1945 Social Partnership model (or ideology), but now on a global scale—and with the aid of friendly governments!¹² The model seems to me problematic in numerous ways. The main one, surely, is whether the role of the

¹¹ This is not simply a rhetorical question, nor a cheap shot. It raises a serious issue for research. Why have not the many union-oriented and internationalist NGO, and academic research and support, groups, not done this? I would suggest it is because, unlike in the 1970s and 1980s, most such groups of which I am aware have ceased expanding the limits of institutionalised unionism, and are today, rather, subordinating themselves to such. (For the 1990s crisis of solidarity NGOs, see GlobalXchange 2003). The rhetorical question then arises of whether they are not failing to ask the question because they already know the answer.

¹² I fear that "Decent Work" may prove to be the successor to the "Social Clause." After being pushed quietly for 15 years, it became *the* major international campaign of the ICFTU and its associates at the turn of the millennium. The "Social Clause" was the fanciful idea of obtaining labour rights with the help of the World Trade Organization, one of whose functions was to remove them. It was forwarded by an equally fanciful strategy, that of quietly lobbying national and inter-state institutions. Finally abandoned, or eclipsed by the rise of the GJ&SM, it has been given no funeral, far less an autopsy. Commenting on the ICFTU in the light of this expensive disaster, Stuart Hodgkinson, who is doing a PhD at the University of Leeds, has uttered, in conversation, an appropriate epitaph: "No Seat at the Table; No Street Credibility." His research is also likely to show that the Social Clause was promoted to star billing by ICFTU General Secretary,

WSF, or the more general Global Justice and Solidarity Movement, is going to be limited to providing a platform for a project aimed at making capitalist globalisation “decent,” or whether the movement is going to have a project for labour that might be simultaneously more *utopian* (post-capitalist) and—given present conditions—more *realistic* (making work-for-capital an ethical issue, treating “non-workers” as equals of wage-earners, addressing the closely inter-related civil-social issues such as useful production, sustainable consumption). There surely needs to be a discussion about the political, theoretical and ethical bases of the two labour utopianisms, one within and the other beyond (Waterman 2003a) the parameters of capitalism.¹³

When an old institution meets a new movement, somethin’s gotta give. Thus has the trade-union movement been periodically transformed during two centuries of existence. But who, which or what is going to so give during the current transformation of capitalism? Bearing in mind that decision-makers of both the TIUIs and the WSF could have quite instrumental reasons for relating to each other, one cannot be certain that the openness within the Forums guarantees that the principles at stake will be continually and publicly raised. (Which of the two international leaderships, for example, is going to even *mention* the extent to which the other is dependent on (inter-)state subsidies, direct or indirect?).

Two marginal emanations of SMU, at the panel on union-movement relations, seemed to me, nonetheless, straws in the wind.

1. The event itself revealed the extent and limits of TIUI knowledge and understanding of contemporary social movements. The General Secretary of the International Metalworkers Federation (IMWF), Marcello Malentacchi (a Swedish national, whose name reveals an immigrant background) confronted

Bill Jordan, now *Lord* Bill Jordan. Jordan, a trade-union promoter of British industry, was persuaded that this campaign would not only meet the needs of Northern unions confronted by globalization but could be sold to Southern ones. The latter met it with scepticism or opposition, suspecting the Northern unions of protectionism or at least paternalism. “Decent Work” may prove to be the stillborn child of a deceased parent. And, in the meantime, a desperately needed international campaign on labour rights remains on some back burner (Waterman 2001c).

¹³ Somewhere between these two utopias can, perhaps, be found the work of another contributor to the dialogue, unjustly ignored in my paper. This is Ronaldo Munck (2002), whose masterly synthesis of relevant issues and literature, comes over as an attempt rather to conciliate between the old institutions and the new movements than to confront the former with the latter.

Trevor Ngwane. Ngwane is a South African socialist who is the most prominent and articulate leader of a recent wave of urban and even rural protest in South Africa, bitterly opposed by the regime, and with which the COSATU has only the most cautious of relations. Malentacchi’s response to Ngwane’s presentation was that the Swedish unions had had a long solidarity relationship with the African National Congress during the anti-apartheid struggle, and that he could not accept that it was now a neo-liberal regime! Yet, in the IMWF report on this event, the following was also stated:

[A] man from the audience met with much approval by claiming that trade unions were increasingly transforming themselves ‘from the inside,’ more and more relating to a changing society with less manual workers, more non-manual workers and with atypical workers—part-time working, or in the informal sector—becoming the norm. He called this phenomenon ‘the new social unionism’ (International Metalworkers Federation 2003a).

Here some comments are in order: (1) it was not a man, it was a Waterman; (2) this is, as far as I recall, a somewhat selective presentation of Waterman’s argument; (3) it was used by Malentacchi in *defence* of COSATU and *against* Ngwane (a comrade-in-arms with whom I had been discussing tactics at the panel). The incident suggests the ambiguous, not to say schizophrenic, condition of the TIUIs. In so far, however, as the identification with a party/state/organization expresses traditional labour inter/nationalism (as well as a failure to follow media reports on South Africa), the *positive* attitude toward the NSU represents *movement*...even if it was still understood in ISMU terms!

2. At the end of the panel I was approached by a union friend I had made whilst researching international labour communications and the left unions in the Philippines, 10 years or more earlier. Now a leader of a left Alliance of Progressive Labour (APL), he pumped my arm, thanked me for my contribution to his organization and then thrust into my hand a trade union handbook entitled *Fighting Back with Social Movement Unionism!*

Despite the title, however, SMU is confined to some 15 of 94 pages, is not sourced in the bibliography, and is understood largely in terms of the Moody variant:

Social movement unionism is a strategy directed at recognising, organising and mobilising all types of workers and unions for engagements in different arenas of struggle. This strategy is not limited to ‘trade union’ organising and has been developed precisely to respond to new work arrangements where employee-employer relationships do not exist or are not clear...[I]t is geared toward the struggle for workers’ rights in all aspects—economic, political and socio-cultural—and at all levels: local, national, global (Alliance of Progressive Labour/Labour Education and Research Network 2001:74).

Here too some comments are in order. Firstly, the APL represents a left union initiative that is attempting to surpass the party-unionism of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU). This was the major left Filipino trade union organization of the 1980s–90s. But, due in large part to its subordination to the (Maoist) Communist Party of the Philippines, the KMU had reproduced its splits and decline following the fall of the Marcos dictatorship. Secondly, the brochure recuperates SMU from previous application to, and identification with, the KMU (Lambert 1990, Scipes 1992). Thirdly, it seems to me, APL use of the concept involves the organization, at least potentially, in international discussion around the concept. (Turning a potentiality into a reality here, admittedly, might require someone to set up an electronic discussion list on SMU!).

Let me summarise and conclude.

Given the growing presence of the traditional international union institutions within the World Social Forum, given, further, their growing presence within the wider global justice and solidarity movement, it is becoming increasingly difficult to set up the TIUI-GJ&SM relationship in binary-oppositional terms. The old unions are both inside and outside the new movement. Furthermore, though this requires demonstration, the new movement is increasingly inside as well as outside the old international union institutions!

The debate/discussion/dialogue on SMU cannot be seen in terms of a binary opposition between left and right, old and new, GJ&SM and TIUIs. It should now be understood as a dialogue/dialectic *within* the GJ&SM. The debate around SMU can nonetheless also be understood as a dialogue/dialectic within and amongst left unions, the broader labour movement, and labour specialists; and this can be done independently of the Forum or the GJ&SM (though unions and networks ignoring the latter are likely to further marginalize themselves locally, nationally, regionally and globally).

I earlier suggested that the ISMU variant of SMU was more influential, precisely because of its closeness to the unions, the movement, and traditional labour discourses. As far as I am concerned this represents a welcome step forward and opening up. I have, however, also suggested that the NISU interpretation is closer to the spirit of GJ&SM/WSF—and is therefore likely to have the longer breath? Furthermore, even though I continue to carry a torch for SMU in general and NISU in particular, this should not be taken to mean that contemporary discourse on labour and international emancipation either is or should be confined to SMU. There are other discourses in existence that are, could be, or should be heard within the movement. Let us look at some of these.

4. OTHER ROADS TO OTHER UTOPIAS

At the time of Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour there was only one “Road to Utopia” (it was a movie, released, appropriately, in 1946). Stalin, Attlee, Peron, Mandel, Mao, Nkrumah and Tito would have agreed with the *pensée unique* (correct thought), if not with the particular road or the point of arrival. As a result of the failures of such labour or popular utopias many left thinkers abandoned the idea of utopia considering it essentially totalitarian. Others today are trying to re-invent social emancipation and utopian thinking in the light of both the past failures and the new possibilities, not to speak of increasingly urgent necessities (Panitch and Leys 2000).

Because of the failure of the old labour utopias one needs to recognize that any left claim to *pensamiento unico* (correct thought, again) is unlikely to get us anywhere except up a one-way dead-end street. It is, in any case, clear to me that a single model or strategy such as ISMU or NISU can be no more than a contribution to a dialogue amongst emancipatory movements and thinkers, within and around the labour movement. In considering other approaches, I will limit myself to two or three recent ones. “Recent” means they have appeared in a world profoundly marked by both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic globalization.¹⁴

Back to Marx/ism (or: don't let go the hand of Marx for fear of finding something worse)

Gregor Gall (2002) and Michael Neary (2002) will certainly complain about being put behind the same banner (the first identifies with a particular Trotskyist-Vanguardist tradition, the second with the radically-democratic school of Workers' Autonomy). Indeed, they may have only these two following things in common: (1) that they take issue with my particular understanding of SMU; (2) that, in doing so, they appeal to traditional Marxist theory. I am not going to deal with their specific criticisms—gross in the first case and subtle in the second. This is because I agree with much of what they say of my conceptualization, particularly about its lack of depth. But I do consider an appeal to Marx

¹⁴ I am embarrassed at not having included Paul Johnston's work in this section (1994, 2001), especially since he discusses social movement unionism in relationship to citizenship theory and movements—another way of articulating labour with emancipation. To the originality of this contribution must be added that Johnston is a labour organizer as well as a theorist/analyst. Moreover, whilst he has not been part of debates about labour internationalism as such, he has addressed himself to at least “transnational” unionism, i.e. that across the US-Mexican border. My concluding quote will have to represent the homage vice occasionally pays to virtue.

or Marxism (two centuries ago) a religious procedure if unaccompanied by a (Marxist?) critique of such in the light of the significant transformations of capitalism that have occurred in the meantime. What I am interested in considering here are the alternatives they propose to SMU or, perhaps, their failure to spell out such alternatives. Gall (2002) concludes:

[T]here is no credible reason to downplay the potential of the workers' movements as a mass based representation of a distinctive social group with power at the points of production, distribution [and] exchange, and with quite distinct interests from other classes and groups. Put another way, previous and present severe difficulties need not and do not invalidate the historical project [that] these workers' organs of collective representation can assume. We should not rush therefore to embrace the notion of social movements and social movement unionism quite so much and quite so keenly because the original formulation of trade unionism has much mileage left in it, albeit with acknowledged and inherent weaknesses. It is [the] transformatory potential of organized labour that we need to keep hold of. But in doing so we must...address the issues of both dominance of conservatism and the paucity of socialist consciousness and leadership within trade unionism. Only in this...may the potential ever become actual.¹⁵

In both its optimistic and its pessimistic notes, Gall reproduces 19th and 20th century Marxist rationalizations for problematic Marxist theoretical assumptions about or interpretations of the working class, trade unions and working-class leadership (c.f. Hyman 1971). In relationship to religious belief, such an appeal to original and eternal truths or prophets is called fundamentalism. This is, of course, impervious to either empirical evidence or rational argument (as demonstrated by my unsuccessful attempt to engage the Socialist Workers Party in dialogue on international labour, Waterman 2002).

Neary (2002) represents both a more general and more theoretical critique of recent left writing on labour, and a more careful one. He distinguishes between ISMU (Moody) and NISU (myself). However, what he is primarily concerned to do is to recover and spell out the implications of Marx' understanding of the category/relationship "labour" (as distinguished from Marx' understanding of "class struggle," "labour movement," and "trade unionism"?). He then attempts to exemplify this understanding with the ups and downs of the South Korean case.

It is not clear however why Marx' understanding of labour is taken to throw light on contemporary Korean (also Mexican, Argentinean and European) protest, whilst his understanding of labour movements—and labour internation-

¹⁵ I am dependent on a draft of his article, kindly made available to me by the author.

alism—are ignored. (Was Marx, as he himself once declared, not a Marxist?). Moreover, Neary's understanding of Zapatismo in Mexico, or of Argentinean roadblocks, as contemporary expressions of the labour-capital contradiction, seems to me seriously reductionist or, at the very least, partial. While he argues, of these contemporary national/regional cases, that they are distinguished by their "determination to confront global capital at the global level" (175), he does so without conceptualizing or even describing the relations between such protests, which Marxists have customarily considered under the rubric of internationalism. Neary concludes on the responsibility of Marxists to develop, on the basis of such cases, a "new transformatory paradigm." But then tells us that "the theory for such a paradigm does not have to be invented: it already exists in the work of Karl Marx" (176). There are, in this argument both chasms and leaps. It appears, finally, that the role of contemporary labour-cum-popular social protests in Neary's argument is to illustrate a 150-year-old theoretical position on labour. This may explain why the nature of the new transformatory paradigm remains both invisible and, to this reader, unimaginable.

Within this church there is no salvation. The Marx and Marxism represented by these two takes on contemporary international labour struggles seems to me both partisan and scholastic. They are *partisan* in imposing the understanding of a specific party or tendency on the evidence—in confining possible explanation to that of their party/tendency (and of this party/ tendency pre-existing globalisation). They are *scholastic* in so far as their interpretations are addressed more to their fellow academics than to the labour movement itself. By this I mean that they are out of touch with either the traditional international trade union institutions or the myriad new labour movements that are occurring beyond these worldwide—something difficult to say of Kim Moody for example. They do not seem to me to engage with the contemporary international labour movement. A living Marxism would surely have to be one that went to school with both the new movements (even within the old unions) and with the new emancipatory theories (beyond Marxism), which is what the following authors attempt to do.

Forward from Marxism (or: beyond a national-industrial Marxism)

In a series of papers, Richard Hyman has considered or reconsidered possible models or scenarios for unionism today (1999a), for labour solidarity (1999b) and the future of labour internationalism (2003). All of these are written in the light of globalization, with an awareness of the new social movements, and within a post-nationalist framework. Although his "five alternative trade union identities" are addressed to a (globalized) Western Europe, they may be recognizable more widely. (See Table 1)

Table 1 – Five Alternative Trade Union Identities*

| Focus of Action | Key Function | Ideal Type |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Occupational Elite | Exclusive Representation | Guild |
| Individual Worker | Services | Friendly Society |
| Management | Productivity Coalition | Company Union |
| Government | Political Exchange | Social Partner |
| Mass Support | Campaigning | Social Movement |

* Source: Hyman 1999a: Table 8.1

The last model is characterized as a “populist campaigning” type (1999a: 130). Hyman considers this to be reviving. And he considers that those unions suffering loss of constituency or membership and with unreliable power resources “seem impelled to embrace at least some elements of the social movement model” (ibid). His notion of union solidarity in the face of globalization (1999b) is obviously addressed to the international level but has just as obvious implications for the national, industrial, corporate or local ones. He understands solidarity not as something pertaining to workers as workers “mechanically,” nor as a heroic, if unachievable, myth, but as a new kind of collectivism “demanding new forms of strategic imagination” (94). Hyman considers the latter in terms of “a new hegemonic project” (ibid), involving a reassertion of the rights of labour against those of capital. And while he considers any radical transformation of historical union forms unlikely, he does consider possible and necessary a revival of organizational capacity, of internal democracy and of labour activism. These imply, in turn, both stronger central structures (level and constituency unspecified), grassroots participation, and new forms of articulation between (1) union levels, and (2) representation and action. Two points follow. One is

to reconstitute unions as discursive organizations which foster interactive internal relationships and serve more as networks than as hierarchies (112).

The other is recognition of the potential of information and communication technologies:

With imagination, unions may transform themselves and build an emancipatory potential for labour in the new millennium. Forward to the ‘virtual trade union of the future’ (ibid).

Hyman’s third piece (2003) is on the internationalism of the future. He argues that the international union organizations:

...are both repelled and attracted by the flexibility and spontaneity of alternative modes of intervention in an arena in which unions once claimed exclu-

sive jurisdiction. What were once known as ‘new social movements’—though by now many have become middle-aged and institutionalized—have been able to engage effectively in forms of ‘contentious politics’...which most trade union leaders until very recently considered signs of immaturity.

The growing attraction is explained by increasing union recognition of the changing world of work and the consequent necessity for unions to both ally with and find new forms for relating to new kinds of workers; by the collapse of inter/national cross-class compromises, thus leading unions to recognize the existence and enter the terrain of “international civil society”; and again by information and communication technology:

...The capacity of trade union activists to communicate directly across national borders (though language remains a problem, the quality of electronic translation systems is improving rapidly) means that many of the traditional hierarchical channels of official interchange have become obsolete. If the institutions of international labour do not become less like bureaucracies and more like network organizations, welcoming the opportunities for increased transparency and internal democracy, they are likely to be consigned to increasing irrelevance. There are many signs that this message is understood.

Although Hyman’s sympathy for either ISMU or NISU might be assumed, he does not use this language and has (regrettably!) not (yet?) entered the debate. Indeed, much of his argument makes reference to or uses traditional sociological, contemporary labour relations or socialist discourses. Whilst I could argue that he leans more in the direction of my own particular understanding, I would hesitate to identify him with it (particularly without asking him first). From Hyman’s contributions I draw two conclusions: 1) it is possible to articulate an emancipatory position on inter/national unionism *without* using the terminology of SMU; 2) it is nonetheless *preferable* to do this with a new theory/conceptualization. The reason for this is that:

The problem with new social movements is that in order to do them justice a new social theory and new analytical concepts are called for. Since neither the one nor the other [...] emerges from the inertia of the disciplines, the risk that they may be undertheorized and undervalued is considerable (Sousa Santos 2003).

Marxism, feminism and environmentalism (or: the last may not be the first, but emancipatory theory and practice grows here too)

What is particularly interesting about the paper of Dietrich and Nayak (2001) is the manner in which it expresses the concerns of the NISU interpretation of SMU without reference to the concept or dialogue.¹⁶ What is further

¹⁶ This argument is adapted from Waterman 2001b.

interesting is that it does so in the process of reflecting on the organization and struggles of artisanal fishworkers and their communities in Southern India in the period of globalization. Dietrich and Nayak open up the matter of an emancipatory labor movement and internationalism beyond the class, the national and the union form that gave it historical shape. This is not only because of its foci but also of its approach, in so far as this is synthesized from Marxism, Feminism, Environmentalism and other contemporary sources.

The case of the Indian fishworkers seems to reveal, one after the other, all the self-limitations of modern national industrial trade unionism. The authors' approach similarly reveals the limitations of those for whom the national-industrial working class and union provide the parameters. Concepts of the "traditional sector," the "informal sector" and of "a-typical employment" are here revealed to be highly ideological and increasingly conservative. A new labor internationalism cannot simply add-and-mix the growing number of women workers or those indirectly waged. It has to be rethought in a manner that no longer considers the traditional worker and union the norm.

The fishworker case also reveals, in open and dramatic form, most of the problems that have been ignored, or concealed, or marginalized, by the modern labour movement: the multiple identities of workers, women-workers/working-women, complex and conflicting notions of community, the search for work and production in harmony with nature, the increasing centrality of the global, the necessity of simultaneously building up an *international* community of workers+communities and, on this base, and in function of their self-empowerment, negotiating with inter-state institutions. Particularly interesting for me is the manner in which, and the form within which, their internationalism is being created. Excluded by traditional unionism from membership of the institutionalized union internationals *and the earlier-mentioned SIGTUR*, the fishworkers have found their internationalism with the support of an international/ist NGO and in the form of a network. These are, of course, the *social intermediary* and *relational mode* customary to new non-union labour internationalisms (which does not mean they do not themselves require critical evaluation).

In terms of approach, too, the study suggests the value of combining traditional Marxism (analysis of capitalism, national and international, the notion of class identity and struggle), Feminism (recognition of gender as a social structure; the necessity of gender-sensitive analysis and strategy), valorization of autonomous women's organization and struggle, and Environmentalism (analysis of the destructive dynamic of industrial capitalism, struggle for environmentally-friendly products, production methods and labour relations).

Let us here avoid two possible misunderstandings. One is that we have discovered *the* way to emancipation, national and international, the other that we

have discovered *the* vanguard thereof. These two errors, customarily combined, have been common to the left historically. And they reveal the continuing legacy of (1) ancient ideologies of human emancipation (that the last shall be the first, that there is a chosen people) and (2) of the modern Marxist one (the most oppressed modern class as the bearer of international emancipation, the socialist intelligentsia as its guide and teacher).

It is not *because* the fishworkers are the most oppressed (or the most marginalized, or that they represent the majority, or that they accumulate within their community the major forms of alienation under globalized capitalism), that they suggest the future of labor emancipation and internationalism. It is rather that systematic reflection upon these matters, made possible by collaboration with critically-minded and socially-committed intellectuals, *can* lead to the revelation of previously concealed truths or the surpassing of ingrained misunderstandings.

There is, finally, no guarantee that such emancipatory visions, desires or capacities, would survive any of the following assaults: (1) increased repression on the part of the state, inter-state policies and practices; commercial aggression on the part of inter/national capital; (2) a sophisticated and extensive reform policy by the same powers; (3) a similarly sophisticated proposal of marriage by an otherwise un-emancipated trade union movement, national or international (i.e. one still insisting on the male superior position); (4) a substitutionist, instead of an empowering, role by the intellectuals/professionals supporting (or leading!) the movement, whether at local, national or international level.

Let us again round up.

Whilst I have given short shrift to some of the literature mentioned above, I am cheered by the approaches of all these others in the dialogue on the global emancipation of labour—or on the contribution of labour to global emancipation. I repeat that I have never been satisfied with my own understanding of SMU, considering it schematic, lacking in a clear relationship to union and general social theory, and too radical to be effective amongst labour movement activists. I do not, either, cherish the role of the prophet in the wilderness, or the small, still voice of truth. So the revelation of other pathways to paradise, other roads to other possible labour utopias, is reassuring.

CONCLUSION: THE APPROPRIATE AGORA FOR ADVANCING THE DIALOGUE

I do not want this paper to be read as self-justificatory (even if I press my own interpretation of SMU), nor apologetic (in so far as I repeat its deficiencies). What I would rather like to do is to see this kind of discussion, including the

other emancipatory discourses on labour internationally, continue in and around the global justice and solidarity movement.

Indeed, it now occurs to me that I should at least qualify my earlier dismissal of the concept of a “social movement field.” Because what we are witnessing is a shift of movement field, or the creation of a new movement pole, within a globalized, networked and informatized capitalism. The concept I have so far preferred for this new space/place is an “agora,” a Greek word meaning both meeting place (clearly) and market place (money and power operate here too). And whereas I have previously applied this only to the World Social Forum—which has been a geographical place as well as a social space—the notion could be extended to the GJ&SM as a whole. This agora, however, is a field and pole also in another sense, that of attraction (and repulsion or exclusion, including the self-exclusion of ultra-radicals).

It needs to be remembered that, in the Europe of the later 19th century, “the social movement”—the movement for the transformation of or in society—was customarily identified with the labour movement. There is a French journal, *Le Mouvement Social*, that commemorates this usage. This *assumed centrality* led to the understanding of *this* as the pole, field, agora around, under, or behind which were ranked the other social movements (in the old empires, and the new colonial world, the national movement played a related role). This assumption also implied that theories of labour such as the class-based theory of Marx either made others irrelevant, surpassed them, or could be eventually extended to cover the nationalist, anti-colonial, peace, women’s, democratic and other “non-class” movements.

It is another paradox—an even more ingenious paradox than our earlier one—that the penetration of capitalist relations into every social sphere, and its spread to both the Nepalese Himalayas and the Peruvian Amazon, has literally de-centred the labour movement. It had earlier, of course, and because of its then centrality, been subject to massive campaigns of both assault and seduction, to a narrowing down of its effective presence, from society to capital and/or state, from a multi-faceted class and popular movement to the institutional(ised) trade union form. At the same time, with the social penetration and geographic spread of capitalist relations and ideologies, “the social movement” has spread to society-in-general, thus making the women’s movements, the democratic movements, the communications movements, the indigenous and anti-imperialist movements—so many autonomous and subject-specific movements—part of the anti-capitalist movement. This at a time in which anti-capitalism—and certainly post-capitalism—is *at a discount within the traditional international union institutions!* However, the manner in which these new movements (some of them actually as old as or older than the labour movement) now become part of an

anti-capitalist one is radically different. It is not by a ranking of centrality, or a place in a hierarchy, and certainly not by a subordination of the movements to an executive committee, vanguard movement or master (“master” also in the sense of gender-blind) discourse. It is by affinity and dialogue. The notion I have mentioned in passing above, of the “political equivalence” of radically-democratic movements does not mean that the women’s movement = the labour movement. It is an expression of recognition and an act of solidarity. It says: “We will treat you as equals because we know (or expect, or hope that) you will treat us as such.” It also says: “We will take up your concerns within our movement and amongst our concerns because we know (or expect or hope) that you will do likewise.” And, finally, “This recognition and incorporation of your issues by and within ours will strengthen our movement.”

The increasingly recognized fact anyway is that the GJ&SM and the WSF are now the field, place, site, agora that aggregates and adds value to social protest. And it should be added that it does so in a manner that potentially surpasses the Westcentrism of the old *mouvement social*. The implications of all this for labour and its internationalism is that unions need—if they are not to be condemned to Richard Hyman’s four other perfectly possible and awful options—to be *here*, to be *open to* (not simply selectively and temporarily *allied* with parts of) the new movement. The same goes, I would have thought, for any left labour theory, national or international, at least if it has emancipatory pretensions.

I have earlier implied that the problem with the ISMU variant of SMU theory was precisely its entrapment within national industrial (anti-) colonial capitalism, and the identification of its proponents with institutionalised inter/national unionism in general, or with specific inter/national organizations in particular. My own variant, NISU, has one foot in the labour movement and one in the new social movements of the 1980s. In so far as the new social movements of the 1980s are now the middle-aged movements of the 2000s, the challenge is addressed simultaneously to these movements and to the WSF and GJ&SM themselves. In so far as both traditions are attracted to the new pole—or in so far as the trade unions are understood in terms of the new movement—then we have an agora within which the dialectic and dialogue between labour and the new social movements, between organization and network, between North and South (and the South within the North and the North within the South), between engagement with and autonomy from capital and state, between the real and virtual aspects or expressions of emancipatory movements, can be worked out.

Or possibly not, possibly not *this* time. In the meantime, however, it seems to me that this is the appropriate place, space and discursive terrain within which this particular discussion can be most fruitfully continued.

Now, somewhere in cyberspace there is an emanation called Cyberbrook (<http://www.brook.com/cyberbrook>). Is it a wo/man? Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it—as seems most appropriate—a cyborg? A Jewish cyborg? In any case, his/her/its signature includes this quote:

It is not our obligation to complete the task of perfecting the world, but neither are we free from beginning it.

Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot [*Ethics of the Parents*]

This is a nice thought from a more innocent epoch of human history—one in which the ethical had a much higher profile than today (when the best hope a UN spokesman can express about nation-states in general, and “President” G.W. Bush in particular, is that they might be “pragmatic”). But today when we no longer need to binarily oppose obligations and enjoyments, I would like to say to those labour activists and specialists within and around the movement, that there is no reason why beginning this should not be also considered both a privilege and a pleasure.

I may, here, have wandered somewhat from trade unions, the labour movement and labour specialists. Paul Johnson (2001:2) brings them nicely back together again, this time with a warning of danger rather than a promise of opportunity:

Social movement scholars typically consider social movement frames as the naive self-understandings of participants, or perhaps as interpretations that serve (or fail to serve) as strategic resources for the activists they study. Their own scholarly analysis, on the other hand, is framed as an objective outsider account. In fact however, and regardless of their *own* naive self-understandings, scholars have themselves long been for better and for worse active framemakers within the world of industrial relations, and the frames they have produced have reflected their own interests, identities and assumptions...

Today, however, not only our labour movement but also those whose work it is to study it are disoriented. So we lack not only social movement frames but also credible theories of the labour movement. And so here, on the assumption that neither scholar nor activist has monopoly on either insight or naivete, we collapse these problems together. We need social movement frames informed by our best social research; we need theories of the labour movement informed by the experience of practitioners. To achieve this—to open up our collective learning process—we need to challenge and reject assumptions widely held on each side of the divide between theory and practice regarding the irrelevance of theory, on the one hand, and the naivete of practitioners on the other. To the extent that we fail to do so, both scholar and activist will continue to fulfill each other’s pessimistic expectations.

The World Social Forums and the wider Global Justice and Solidarity Movement has already, as I might have suggested, proven to be a place where both activists and scholars (and scholar-activists or activist-scholars) meet together,

on an assumption of such interdependence. I would have thought it likely to be the agora within which the emancipatory discourse previously encompassed within the concept of Social Movement Unionism, will take off.

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* This listing includes items beyond those referred to in the text above. It has been contributed to extensively by Michael Schiavone, of the Australian National University, who is completing his PhD on the notion of SMU in relation to the USA.

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APPENDIX 1 – A NEW SOCIAL UNIONISM, INTERNATIONALISM, COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE*

A new social unionism. By this I mean one surpassing existing models of "economic", "political" or "political-economic" unionism, by addressing itself to all forms of work, by taking on socio-cultural forms, and addressing itself to civil society. Such a union model would be one which, amongst other characteristics, would be:

- Struggling within and around waged work, not simply for better wages and conditions but for increased worker and union control over the labour process, investments, new technology, relocation, subcontracting, training and education policies. Such strategies and struggles should be carried out in dialogue and common action with affected communities and interests so as to avoid conflicts (e.g. with environmentalists, with women) and to positively increase the appeal of the demands
- Struggling against hierarchical, authoritarian and technocratic working methods and relations, for socially-useful and environmentally-friendly products, for a reduction in the hours of work, for the distribution of that which is available and necessary, for the sharing of domestic work, and for an increase in free time for cultural self-development and self-realisation
- Intimately related with the movements of other non-unionised or non-unionisable working classes or categories (petty-commodity sector, homeworkers, peasants, housewives, technicians and professionals)

* This is an extract from Waterman 2001:13-16, 22–24. The references can be found in the general bibliography. The crossheads are added.

- Intimately related to other non- or multi-class democratic movements (base movements of churches, women's, residents', ecological, human-rights and peace movements, etc) in the effort to create a powerful and diverse civil society
- Intimately related to other (potential) allies as an autonomous, equal and democratic partner, neither claiming to be, nor subordinating itself to, a "vanguard" or "sovereign" organization or power
- Taking up the new social issues within society at large, as they arise for workers specifically and as they express themselves within the union itself (struggle against authoritarianism, majoritarianism, bureaucracy, sexism, racism, etc)
- Favouring shopfloor democracy and encouraging direct horizontal relations both between workers and between the workers and other popular/democratic social forces
- Active on the terrain of education, culture and communication, stimulating worker and popular culture, supporting initiatives for democracy and pluralism both inside and outside the dominant institutions or media, locally, nationally, globally
- Open to networking both within and between organizations, understanding the value of informal, horizontal, flexible coalitions, alliances and interest groups to stimulate organizational democracy, pluralism and innovation...

A New Labour Internationalism

In so far as this addresses itself to the problems of a GNI capitalism (of which inter-state relations are but one part), this would have to see itself as part of a general global solidarity movement, from which it must learn and to which it must contribute. A new kind of labour internationalism implies, amongst other things:

- Moving from the international relations of union or other officials towards face-to-face relations of concerned labouring people at the shopfloor, community or grassroots level
- Surpassing dependence on the centralised, bureaucratic and rigid model of the pyramidal international organization by stimulating the self-empowering, decentralised, horizontal, democratic and flexible model of the international information network
- Moving from an "aid model" (one-way flows of money and material from the "rich, powerful, free" unions, workers or others), to a "solidarity model" (two-way or multi-directional flows of political

- support, information and ideas)
- Moving from verbal declarations, appeals and conferences to political activity, creative work, visits, or direct financial contributions (which will continue to be necessary) by the working people concerned
- Basing international solidarity on the expressed daily needs, values and capacities of ordinary working people, not simply on those of their representatives
- Recognising that whilst labour is not the privileged bearer of internationalism, it is essential to it, and therefore linking up with other democratic internationalisms, so as to reinforce wage-labour struggles and surpass a workerist internationalism
- Overcoming ideological, political and financial dependency in international solidarity work by financing internationalist activities from worker or publicly-collected funds, and carrying out independent research activities and policy formulation
- Replacing the political/financial coercion, the private collusion and public silences of the traditional internationalisms, with a frank, friendly, constructive and public discourse of equals, made available to interested workers
- Recognising that there is no single site or level of international struggle and that, whilst the shopfloor, grassroots and community may be the base, the traditional formal terrains can be used and can also be influenced
- Recognising that the development of a new internationalism requires contributions from and discussion with labour movements in West, East and South, as well as within and between other socio-geographic regions

Elements of such an understanding can be found within both international union pronouncements and practices. It is, I think, becoming the common sense amongst left labour internationalists although some still seem to consider labour (or even union) internationalism as the one that leads, or ought to lead, the new wave of struggles against neo-liberal globalisation. Yet others are beginning to go beyond ideal types to spell out global labour/popular and democratic alternatives to "globalisation-from-above" in both programmatic and relational terms (Brecher, Costello and Smith 2000).

Internationalism, Labour Internationalism, Union Internationalism

We need to distinguish between the concepts of "internationalism", "labour

internationalism,” and “union internationalism.” Within social movement discourse, *internationalism* is customarily associated with 19th century labour, with socialism and Marxism. It *may* be projected backwards so as to include the ancient religious universalisms, or the liberal cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment. And it *should* be extended, in both the 19th and 20th century, so as to include women’s/feminist, pacifist, anti-colonial and human rights forms. In so far as it is limited to these two centuries, and to a “world of nation states,” we need a new term for the era of globalization. Some talk of *transnationalism*. I prefer *global solidarity*, in so far as it is addressed to globalization, its discontents and alternatives. As for *labour internationalism* this refers to a wide range of past and present labour-related ideas, strategies and practices, including those of co-operatives, labour and socialist parties, socialist intellectuals, culture, the media and even sport. As for *union internationalism* this is restricted to the primary form of worker self-articulation during the NIC era. Trade union internationalism has so displaced or dominated labour internationalism during the later 20th century as to be commonly conflated with the latter. Yet it is precisely *union internationalism* that is most profoundly in crisis, and in question, under our GNI capitalism [...]

Networking, Communications, Culture

We really need an additional, even an alternative, principle of worker self-articulation (both joining and expression) appropriate to our era. In other words, we need one that would continually and effectively undermine the reproduction of bureaucracy, hierarchy, and dogma that occurs also within “radical” and “revolutionary” unions.

This principle is the *network*, and the practice is *networking*. There is no need to fetishise the network or to demonise the organization. “Networking” is also a way of understanding human interrelations, and we can therefore see an organization in network terms, just as we can look at a network in organizational ones. Nonetheless, it remains true that the movement from an NIC to a GNI capitalism is also one from an organised to a networked capitalism. It is from the international labour networks and networking that the new initiatives, speed, creativity, and flexibility tend to come. An international unionism concerned with being radical-democratic and internationalist will learn this, or it will stagnate. International union networking itself will stagnate if it does not recognise itself as a part of a radical-democratic internationalist project that goes far beyond the unions, far beyond labour problems.

“Networking,” relates to communication rather than institutions. International labour networking must be informed by and produce a radical-democratic style of communication and sense of culture a “global solidarity culture.”

Labour has a long and rich cultural history and has in the past innovated and even led popular, democratic, and even avant-garde cultural movements. Once again, international trade unionism has to either surpass its reductionist self-definition or remain invisible in the international media arena, which is increasingly challenging and even replacing the institutional terrain as the central site of democratic contestation and deliberation.